

MEDIA RELEASE

Connectivity, Cooperation and Communities Key Themes To Emerge From Parkes

The [Inland Rail Conference 2018](#) jointly presented by the **Australian Logistics Council (ALC)** and the **Australasian Railway Association (ARA)** in **Parkes NSW** on 18-19 July 2018 has identified the challenges and opportunities presented by this nation-building project.

With around 400 people in attendance over the event's [two days](#), there was ample opportunity for Inland Rail to be examined from a variety of perspectives.

Supported by Gold Sponsor, the **Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC)** as well as the **Parkes Shire Council**, attendees also heard keynote presentations from leading political figures and executives associated with Inland Rail.

The conference helped to clarify priorities for businesses, governments and local communities, and clearly set out what needs to be done next to ensure the significant public investment being made to construct the Inland Rail delivers real benefits for supply chain efficiency, safety, export competitiveness, employment and regional development.

Among the key action priorities to emerge were:

- **Ensuring that the Melbourne-Brisbane transit time of under 24 hours is adhered to** – an absence of reliability and certainty will undermine market confidence;
- **Securing the cooperation and active involvement** of the Victorian, NSW and Queensland state governments to construct the project;
- **Dealing with the 'last mile' issues** by getting the planning and construction of links to the Port of Brisbane and the Port of Melbourne, as well as ensuring efficient rail linkages to key ports in NSW;
- **Using the multi-jurisdictional nature of the project to drive harmonisation** of planning, environmental, freight data and industry training standards. National consistency in these areas will have benefits lasting well beyond the Inland Rail's construction period;
- **Ensuring we equip the current and emerging workforce with skills** needed to construct, maintain and operate the Inland Rail. This is imperative given Australia's 'infrastructure boom' and ageing workforce;
- **Proactively engaging with local communities** through local councils, schools and other relevant bodies to ensure they appreciate and can take advantage of the opportunities Inland Rail presents;
- **Partnering with the private sector** to drive innovation in how the project is delivered and push further direct and indirect investment along the route
- **Demonstrating the absolute necessity of the Inland Rail project** by highlighting negative consequences for Australia's supply chain efficiency, traffic congestion, passenger rail services and road safety without vastly improved freight rail infrastructure; and
- **Putting data gathering frameworks in place** that will enhance freight visibility and demonstrate the viability of Inland Rail as the right mode for particular commodities;

The response to this first industry-led conference focussed entirely on Inland Rail was phenomenal, and shows that industry participants are eager to work cooperatively with governments to deliver this transformation for Australia's freight networks in the years ahead.

Inland Rail will also form a central part of the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy that is currently being developed by the Federal Government. Accordingly, it will be essential to focus on the development of infrastructure that supports Inland Rail's seamless integration into the rest of our freight network, including linkages to ports and the development of intermodal terminals.

The conference showed there is enormous enthusiasm for Inland Rail across a wide range of industries and a diverse range of communities, be it ports in our major cities or smaller regional communities eager to capitalise on its economic development opportunities.

The challenge for industry, governments and all those associated with this project over the next year as construction begins will be to harness that enthusiasm, using it to ensure continued progress on the project, while also deepening community awareness about rail's critical role in improving our export competitiveness and meeting Australia's future freight task.

Following the success of this inaugural event, ALC and the ARA are now exploring opportunities to stage the next Inland Rail Conference in Toowoomba in mid-2019.

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